

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3652

C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 7284

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, AORG, AFSP, MILI, OGEN

SUBJ: USE BY FOREIGN DIPLOMATS OF NAVY EXCHANGE/

COMMISSARY/EMBASSY SHOP

1. AFTER CAREFUL WEIGHING OF THE PROS AND CONS, WE DECIDED LAST SEPTEMBER TO TERMINATE, EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 28, 1975, THE LONG-STANDING PRACTICE OF PERMITTING FOREIGN DIPLOMATS ACCREDITED TO THE GROC TO USE THE U.S. MILITARY EXCHANGE AND COMMISSARY AND THE

EMBASSY BEVERAGE STORE, MOFA WAS INFORMED BY NOTE DATED SEPTEMBER 12, 1974 AND HAS NOT, SO FAR, FORMALLY REACTED, BUT PROTOCOL CHIEF INFORMALLY VOICED APPROBATION AND INDICATED THAT MOFA WOULD ESTABLISH SUBSTITUTE FACILITIES. AMBASSADOR UNGER PERSONALLY INFORMED ALL DIPLOMATIC MISSION CHIEFS, INCLUDING THE THEN DEAN AND HIS SUCCESSOR, COSTA RICAN AMBASSADOR EDGAR SANCHEZ. UNTIL RECENTLY, THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS APPEARED TO HAVE ACCEPTED THE DECISION, ALBEIT RELUCTANTLY AND PROBABLY WITH SOME DISBELIEF. BUT THERE IS NOW ONE INDICATION OF HOW UNHAPPY THEY ARE WITH THIS DECISION.

2. ON DECEMBER 2, SANCHEZ TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT COSTA RICA AND THREE OTHER LATIN COUNTRIES, WHICH HE DID NOT IDENTIFY, "MAINTAIN RELATIONS WITH GROC ONLY AS EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FOR U.S. POLICIES TOWARD THE GROC AND WILL VIEW TERMINATION OF PRIVILEGES AS EVIL."
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DENCE U.S. NO LONGER INTERESTED IN THAT SUPPORT."

3. WHILE POST RECORDS DO NOT SHOW WHY OR WHEN, EXACTLY, THIS PRACTICE BEGAN, F.S. OFFICERS WHO FIRST SERVED HERE IN THE EARLY TO MID-1950'S RECALL THAT IT WAS ENTRENCHED THEN. THE PURPOSE EVIDENTLY WAS TO ENCOURAGE MAXIMUM RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION BY HELPING TO OFFSET THE THEN EXISTING SUBSTANTIAL AUSTERITY IN LOCAL LIVING CONDITIONS. ENTIRELY ASIDE FROM POLICY CONSIDERATIONS, AND THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT MID-1950'S AUSTERITY WAS THE RATIONALE FOR OUR EARLIER POLICY, THE FACT IS TAIWAN NOW HAS NO SIGNIFICANT MATERIAL SHORTAGES. IT OFFERS, INSTEAD, MANY LUXURIES. ALSO, THIS PRACTICE HAS EVOKEN MUCH CRITICISM, PARTICULARLY FROM AMERICANS RESIDENT IN TAIWAN WHO ARE INELIGIBLE FOR SUCH PRIVILEGES; AND THEIR COMPLAINTS HAVE TRIGGERED A STEADY FLOW OF CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRIES. MOREOVER, SOME OF OUR DIPLOMATIC CORPS COLLEAGUES HAVE ADDED TO OUR DISCOMFORT WITH THE SITUATION BY BLACKMARKETING, OFTEN QUITE OPENLY.

4. SIXTY-NINE PRINCIPALS WILL BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THIS DECISION; HALF HAVE ENJOYED FULL PRIVILEGES, AND THE REMAINDER, EMBASSY SHOP ONLY. WE CHOSE THE FEBRUARY DATE ON THE THEORY THAT A FAIRLY LENGTHY TRANSITION PERIOD WOULD BE LESS PAINFUL, AND WOULD GIVE THE GROC TIME TO DEVELOP SUBSTITUTE ARRANGEMENTS. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING FROM MOFA ON THIS SCORE, AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ STATES THAT MOFA HAD OFFERED TO SET UP A "SMALL DUTY-FREE STORE" WHICH, HOWEVER, SANCHEZ COMPLAINED, WOULD "NOT BE THE SAME" (AS FACILITIES OFFERED BY U.S.).

5. WE INTEND TO PROCEED ON SCHEDULE, BUT THOUGHT THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE INFORMED, IN CASE INQUIRIES ARE MADE AT THE WASHINGTON END.
POPPL

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